

USC Cinematic Arts

CTPR 438 - PRACTICUM IN PRODUCING

2 Units

Fall 2024—Tuesday—4:00 - 6:50 pm

Location: RZC111

Instructor: Dan Lupovitz
Office Hours: by appointment
Contact Info: lupovitz@usc.edu

Teaching Assistant/ Student Assistant: Colin Galeste
Contact Info: galeste@usc.edu

Course Description:

This course will provide a comprehensive overview of the world of producing. It is designed to provide the skills for producing a CTPR 480 project and projects produced outside of USC. We will look at how projects are conceived, developed, packaged, financed and marketed. Who are you as a producer? What kind of projects do you want to make? How do you get them made? We'll cover the nuts and bolts of short and long form projects. By the end of the semester, each student should have the practical skills to pitch a project, develop a script, package the talent, schedule and budget a screenplay, manage a production and see it through its marketing and distribution. The course will consist of lecture, discussion, audiovisual presentations and if possible given schedules, guest speakers from within the industry.

Prerequisites: CTPR 310 - Intermediate Production
CTPR 425 - Production Planning

Course Notes

The course is graded on a letter-grade scale.

Projects

1. **Production Company Name and Logo:** Each student will create a name and a logo for their production company. ***Due September 3rd.***
2. **Movie Release Report:** Each student will report on a movie, either theatrical, cable or for streaming, released during the term. Reports need to include either distributor or streaming/broadcast venue, creative elements, marketing profile and Rotten Tomatoes score. If theatrical, release needs to include the opening weekend box office, number of screens and per screen average, as published on boxofficemojo.com and the-numbers.com. If cable or streaming, look for any audience hits/scores information published and marketing profile in the trades. Tom Bruggemann's release round up on Mondays published in Indie Wire often shows this. ***Due date will be scheduled based on selection.***
3. **IP Acquisition Project:** Each student will chose a piece of source material such as a book, play, magazine article, remake, etc., from which a screenplay could be adapted. Students will track down who represents the rights and contact them to find out if they are available and any other information on what the representative would require to option the material. Report to class what your source material is and who represents it ***by October 15th.*** Report to class the results of your pitch to rep to theoretically acquire rights ***due by November 19th.***

4. **Individual Project Pitch:** Each student will pitch a feature idea to the class. The pitch should last no longer than 5 minutes. The class will respond and discuss. **Due September 17th.** Using this input, students will adjust their pitch, and add the creative package of writer, director and cast. **Due October 22nd/29th.**
5. **Final Pitch: "Production Slate" Pitch:** Each student will create a slate of three projects. The centerpiece will be the project they've been pitching, adding to their creative package a budget figure, a production plan, a marketing and a distribution plan with a poster and a tag line. The other two projects will be ideas only for projects in a medium of your choice. The slate as a whole should have a cohesive "personality" that reflects the identity of the producer and their production company. Final projects should be handed in on a digital file. **Due November 26th and December 3rd.**

Participation

Class participation will be graded by a combination of participation in class discussions and giving feedback on presentations made by other students.

Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	% of Grade
Class Participation	15%
Production Company and Logo	5%
Movie Release Presentation	5%
Individual Project Pitch Part One	15%
Individual Project Pitch Part Two	15%
IP Acquisition Project	15%
Final Pitch	30%

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter Grade & Percentage Range

A	100% to 95%	C	76% to 73%
A-	94% to 90%	C-	72% to 70%
B+	89% to 87%	D+	69% to 67%
B	86% to 83%	D	66% to 63%
B-	82% to 80%	D-	62% to 60%
C+	79% to 77%	F	59% to 0%

Attendance

Two absences will result in your grade being lowered by one full point (ex: A >B). A third absence will result in your grade being lowered another full point (B >C). Your grade will be lowered by a point for every subsequent absence. Two late arrivals equals one full absence.

Exemptions will be allowed on a case-by-case basis and must be supported by a written accommodation request from the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS).

Students who become ill and need to self-isolate will be supported in their efforts to stay current with classwork and assignments. Faculty are no longer required to provide an option for students to zoom into

class. However, Faculty may choose to use zoom at their discretion in an effort to help students stay current in their course work.

Students must contact the professor or SA 24 hours prior to class start time if they need to miss class for any reason.

Academic Integrity

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity’s website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

AI POLICY

In this course you will be building a movie over the course of the semester. Because this is a producing course and not a writing course, you may use AI to help you invent the STORY CONTENT of your project. But because we’re working on your critical and creative thinking skills as producers, you may not use AI on any of the producing components, which are all the elements you will use to build your movie, writer, director, actor choices, budget and production plan choices, etc.

Many of you are writers and creative story thinkers and so you may and are encouraged to work on the story content yourself and not use AI.

If you use AI, you need to credit that in your presentation.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Course Schedule:

Note: This schedule is approximate. It may be adjusted as required.

Week 1 - August 27th: COURSE OVERVIEW and WHAT IS A PRODUCER?

- Introductions
- Course overview
- Review syllabus, projects, grading
- What is a producer?
- Producer titles and definitions — various types of producers
- What is the work, the craft?
- Who are you as a producer?

ASSIGNMENT: Students will come up with a name of their production company and a logo. Email your logo to Colin before next class.

Week 2 - September 3rd: WHAT DO I WANT TO PRODUCE?

Presentations: Production Companies and Logos

- Creating your slate
- Where do ideas come from?
- What will work in the market place? How do you know?
- What's the right medium for the idea?
- What's source material?
- What is the marketplace landscape we're in now and how can you make it work for you?

Assignment: Work in your groups to create log lines for next week.

Week 3 - September 10th: STEP ONE — THE ART OF THE PITCH

- What makes a good pitch?
- What's the story?
- Who's the audience
- Why should this be made now?
- Who are you pitching to?
- Pitching with a writer and/or director
- Length, characters, visual language, presentation, the art of the meeting
- Originals vs. Adaptations
- Log Line Game

ASSIGNMENT: Bring an idea to pitch for your Pitch Project. Pitch must be for a feature film.

Week 4 - September 17th: PITCHING

Presentations: Pitch Projects ideas. The class will respond and give input.

Assignment: Adjust your pitch in ways you see it can be improved based on the input from the class.

Choose source material for IP acquisition project

Week 5 - September 24th: WORKING WITH THE WRITER

Presentations: Finish Pitch Projects

- Script Strategies
- Adaptations versus Originals
- Writing steps: drafts and polishes
- How does the producer work with the writer? With and without a director.
- How to give script notes.
- How and when should you replace the writer?
- WGA versus non-WGA

Assignment: Choose a writer for your Pitch Project

Prepare to present your source material for IP acquisition project: what is it, who's the author, are they represented, what's your strategy to contact rep and investigate if rights are available and how you could acquire them.

Week 6 - October 1st: WORKING WITH THE DIRECTOR

- How do you choose a director?
- How does the producer work with the director? In development, in preproduction, in production, in post-post-production.
- Writer/directors and Director/Producers
- How a director brands your project

Assignment: Choose a director for your Pitch Project

Week 7 - OCTOBER 8th: TALENT PACKING

- Actors: Strategies for attaching lead cast
- Working with the casting director
- Character breakdowns
- Who should be in your project and how do you get them?
- Marquee value versus Creative Concerns: do they always have to be in conflict
- How actors brand your project

Assignment: Choose lead cast for your Pitch Project

Continue work on your IP Acquisition Project Investigation

Week 8 - OCTOBER 15th: DEALS

Presentations: IP Acquisition Project: what is it, who wrote it, who represents it, how will you approach to acquire rights.

- Writer Deals: Deal memos, shopping agreements, option purchase agreements, chain of title
- Director deals: holding deals, production deals
- Actor deals: actor reps, when do you make the deal, what are the components?
Production deals: crew, cast, E&O Insurance
- Producer deals: how to take care of yourself Personal attorneys versus Production attorneys
- Negotiation Exercise: Are you a buyer or a seller?
- Report to class what the Source Material your source material is and who represents it.

Assignment: Prepare Second Pitch of Pitch Project with creative elements of Writer, Director and key cast.

Based on feedback, work on your IP Acquisition Project investigation

Week 9 - OCTOBER 22nd: CREATIVE PACKAGE PITCH

Presentations: Creative Package Pitches

Assignment: Begin to invent ideas for your 2nd and 3rd projects for your slate

Week 10 - OCTOBER 29th: STUDIO vs. INDEPENDENT vs. INTERNATIONAL

Presentation: Finish Creative Package Pitches

- How do you know what kind of project you have and how to best get it made. Identifying and distinguishing between projects that are right for the studio system, the independent marketplace or the international production or co-production structure.
- Sales agents and Pre-sales

Assignment: Start to determine if your Pitch Project is a Studio, Independent or International production or co-production, what budget level it will be and where you'll shoot it.

Continue work on your IP Acquisition Project Investigation

Week 11 - NOVEMBER 5th: THE ROLE OF THE PRODUCER IN PRODUCTION

- The Producer In Production
- Working with the director
- Working with department heads
- Managing a budget and a schedule
- How to determine what size project you have based on your idea and your creative elements.
- How to figure out where and how to shoot.
- Tax credits, subsidies and rebates...and does the location have the crew? What you save versus what you spend

Assignment: Continue working on your second and third project for your slate. Start to determine if your Pitch Project is a Studio, Independent or International production or co-production, what budget level it will be and where you'll shoot it.

Continue work on your IP Acquisition Project Investigation

Week 12 - NOVEMBER 12th: MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION

- Marketing campaigns
- Advertising vs. Publicity
- What works and what doesn't?
- How does the producer work with the marketing team? What make a good poster and trailer Distribution models: platform, limited, wide
- VOD, Day and Date
- The Collapsing Window
- Streamers: Netflix, Amazon, Apple, Hulu

Assignment: Create a distribution plan with a first choice distributor and a marketing plan with a target audience and what marketing elements and strategies you'll use to attract them. Create a poster and tag line for your marketing campaign Continue working on idea for your second and third project for your slate

Continue work on your IP Acquisition Project Investigation

Week 13 - November 19th: FILM FESTIVALS, FILM MARKETS AND FINDING YOUR DISTRIBUTOR

Presentation: IP results reports

- The difference between Festivals and Markets
- How do use festivals to find distribution
- How to use festivals to launch your film if you already have distribution
- The pros and cons of festivals
- How to choose the right festival
- How to use a film market

Assignment: Prepare to pitch your final version of your Pitch Project, complete with writer, director, lead cast, budget level, production plan, distribution plan and ideal distributor, target audience, a movie poster and a tag line.

Week 14 - NOVEMBER 26th: FINAL PITCH PROJECTS, PART ONE

Week 15 - DECEMBER 3rd: FINAL PITCH PROJECTS, PART TWO

Land Acknowledgement

USC acknowledges that we are on the traditional land of the Tongva People. For thousands of years, the Tongva people lived on this land we occupy today and were considered the most powerful indigenous peoples to inhabit the Los Angeles basin. Along with the Tongva, we also recognize the Chumash, Tataviam,

Serrano, Cahuilla, Juaneño, and Luiseño People, for the land that USC also occupies around Southern California. To learn about the Indigenous land on which your learning location resides, please visit [Native-Land.ca](#) to discover the Original People of your home.

The School of Cinematic Arts Support Systems and Statements

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation, or violence against persons or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting, they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail diversity@cinema.usc.edu or anonymously submit a report on SCA Community: <https://scacommunity.usc.edu/secure/diversityEquity/> You can also read more about how to report discrimination based on a protected class here: <https://eeotix.usc.edu/get-help/what-are-my-choices-text/>

SCA Office of Student Services

213-740-8358 or StudentAffairs@cinema.usc.edu

SCA Embedded Therapists

Students enrolled in an SCA major program can schedule an appointment with an embedded therapist for the School of Cinematic Arts through the student health portal [MySHR](#).

SCA Community

For additional SCA resources please visit scacommunity.usc.edu

Creative Technology and Support

(213) 821-4571

creativetech@cinema.usc.edu

Location: SCA 128

Support Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 AM - 8:30 PM

<https://knowledgebase.sca.usc.edu/>

<https://workstations.sca.usc.edu/>

Physical Production Office

The Physical Production Office assists students and faculty with production-related matters including production numbers, locations, permits, insurance, gear and equipment vendors, safety issues, and crew and actor policies. More information can be found by visiting the online [Production Procedures and Safety Handbook](#). The Physical Production Office is located at SCA 304 and is open every weekday from 9am-5pm (Fridays 9am-1pm). You can also reach the Office by calling 213-740-1298 or by email at spo@cinema.usc.edu.

Office of Industry Relations

School of Cinematic Arts - SCA 235

(213) 740-4432

ir@cinema.usc.edu

Cinematic Arts Library Research Guide

<https://libguides.usc.edu/cinema>

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodation is not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

COVID-19 Resource Center - <https://coronavirus.usc.edu/what-should-i-do/>

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services

(though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call
Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

PLEASE NOTE:
FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX